

Rowan County Annual Report 2002

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General Government

County Assessor

The County Assessor's office has been a necessary part of Rowan County since the beginning of county government. This department is responsible for the listing, assessing and billing of all taxable property within Rowan County. This property includes real estate, personal property, motor vehicles, business personal property and public utilities.

A representation of Rowan County tax base over the past fifteen years is as follows: 1988 total tax base was 2.75 billion dollars, 44 thousand real estate parcels, 18 total employees; 1993 total tax base was 4.07 billion dollars, 52 thousand real estate parcels, 22 total employees. (Note: Revaluation Department added with four employees in order to conduct a full in-house reappraisal amounting to very significant savings to Rowan County); 1998 total tax base was 5.56 billion dollars, 65 thousand real estate parcels, 22 total employees; 2003 total tax base projection of 9.50 billion dollars, 75 thousand real estate parcels, 22 total employees.

The Assessor's office is now computerized with a fully functional listing, appraisal, billing and collection system. Limited tax information is currently available on [Rowan County's internet web site](#) with much more data access in the near future. Rowan County's remapping project (the first in nearly fifty years) is nearing completion and should provide very accurate information for taxpayers as well as better direction for Emergency Service needs.

The Assessor's office has been extremely fortunate to have attracted and retained very high quality people over the past years. We currently have eight real and personal property appraisers on our staff and all have been certified by the Department of Revenue. Additionally, we have two appraisers who are further certified by the North Carolina Appraisal Board. Our mapping department is staffed by state certified cartographers who have many years' experience in their field. Our clerical staff provides daily service in both maintaining our records and providing information and assistance regarding property tax matters. These employees account for most of our front line customer service and handle a very tough job in an outstanding manner. We consider all of our employees as long term.

Tax Collector

The Tax Collector's office collects local property taxes for Rowan County, eight municipalities, and twenty-four fire districts. During fiscal year 2002, the office collected more than \$48 million of current and delinquent taxes for Rowan County. With a tax collection rate of 96.03 percent, they provide more than 50 percent of total revenue for

our County. Over 300,000 items or calls were processed through the office, including real estate bills, vehicle bills, tax certifications, business licenses and citizen inquiries.

Providing quality customer service to citizens is a high goal for the office. A taxpayer may call the office at anytime to obtain tax information about their account. To respond to some citizens' requests tax payments via credit card is now available. Citizens may pay their taxes 24/7 by dialing a toll free number or Internet. Official Payments charges a minimal fee for the service.

The Tax Collector's office opened its doors to local school children for visual learning. Moreover, the office continued to partner with the Rowan/Cabarrus Community College and Davidson County Community College Paralegal programs, allowing them office use during instruction on real estate title searches.

Elections

The Elections Department started full time permanent registration in 1968. Our first office was in the 100 Block of West Council Street.

Some big changes in our past included:

- Change from counting paper ballots by hand to the purchase of a punch card
- We obtained a voting system in 1977, and purchased optical-scan voting system with touch-screen for one-stop absentee voters in 1999.
- The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) allows registering by mail and registering at State Agencies. No more taking oath in front of election officials to register. Other changes were implemented along with the NVRA but are too numerous to list.
- We also saw the redistricting of Congressional and Legislative lines. Rowan County is no longer represented by 1 elected official per county in these districts.
- The Elections Department now is on a State Computer System.

Currently we have over 80,000 registered voters in Rowan County. We receive registrations and changes daily. We now mail voters postcards with their polling place and other registration information. We program voting tabulators for 46 precincts in the county to count ballots and give results from the precincts. They are sent in on Election night and placed on the County Web Site.



We also have different ballot styles due to the districts within Rowan County. This means that one area of the county may vote on a district that another area may not. We have to order different ballots for all styles within the county.

Our office always has challenges due to all the changes in the laws and our small staff, but we will always strive to give our citizens confidence that we provide fair and open elections which accurately reflect the intent of the voters.

Information Services

The IS Department was founded around 1962 by then Auditor/Treasurer Wayne Simson, with Voter Registration, Property Taxes, Payroll and Accounts Payable as our first application. For the first few years we were officially called the Tabulating Department, but most employees just referred to us as the IBM Department not really knowing what to call a department with computer equipment. The IS Department was started in the basement of the Court House with 5 employees and now has 10 employees.

Some highlights of the past 50 years include:

- Changing from “batch” to “interactive” data processing. Originally data was keyed to punch cards (then directly to disk) only to be “Read” by a computer in a separate process before the data was available to be used. Now most data is entered online and is available immediately.
- Computer equipment (PC’s, Terminals and Printers) residing only in the IS Department moving to the employee’s desktop. No longer does everything have to be taken or picked up in the IS Department. Now employees have a greater computing power on their desktops than the whole County did 30 years ago.
- Communications reaching outside of Rowan County Government. For many years employees were lucky if they could communicate (send messages, etc) even to other employees. Now most employees can use email, web access, etc to communicate and work with others anywhere in the world.

The number and type of equipment we use is increasing and changing everyday. This requires staff to be ready for “anything” and equipment to have a shorter lifespan. In addition, IS staff now has to constantly go to other departments to maintain equipment. Managing and maintaining this equipment takes a greater percentage of time and resources than writing new programs, and providing new equipment.

There will certainly be more automation and not less of it in the future. Exploring what new technologies to “invest in” and what to “skip” will continue to be a major challenge in the future. Selecting technology for the benefits it delivers instead of its “bells and whistles”, always needs to be a driving force when spending tax payers funds.

Administration

The Human Resources department was started on September 1, 1986 with 2 employees and has now grown to 30 employees as the Administration Department.

Changes we have dealt with over the years have included the implementation of new laws, (COBRA, FMLA, FLSA, ect.) and Self Insured programs (Health, Workers Comp., Liability, Property), as well as the combination of the General Services Department, Human Resources Department, and Veteran Services into one Administration Department.

Challenges we expect to face in the future include our need for more training and better-qualified staff to deal with a very complex system. We need to focus on providing a higher level of service with the same (or less) number of staff members. Keeping staff informed and trained on the constant changing laws and technological advancements is a high priority.

Register of Deeds

The Register of Deeds Office came into being in 1869 when it was separated from the County Clerk's Office. Clerk Obadiah Woodson was the first Register of Deeds. Over the last 50 years, two of the biggest changes have been the move from indexing by typewriter to computer indexing in the 1980's and the beginning of the move from microfilm to the use of computer scanning and the Internet in 2000. In the future, we hope to continue migrating away from microfilm to provide access at any time to users of the office.



In 2003, we processed:

- 30,495 L/R Documents
- 973 Births
- 1,238 Deaths
- 53 Discharges
- 970 Marriage Licenses
- 610 Notaries
- 100,327 copies



Finance

The Finance Department was originally considered part of the County Manager's Office. The first Finance Director, Tim Russell, was hired on April 2, 1984. The fiscal year budget for 1953 was \$724,434 and the budget for 2003 is \$95,843,871.

The growth of the budget, the increasing complexity of Federal and State reporting, plus the use of computer technology has required an increase in staff with advanced accounting and technical skills.

The Finance Department continually seeks to maximize each dollar to ensure that County Departments may continue to provide excellent service to citizens.

Maintenance

The new, larger and more reflective road signs appearing around the county are made and installed by the Rowan County Administration Department. With over 3,400 public and private roads in the county, it's a big job. Close to 550 new signs are installed each year to replace damaged and missing signs, as well as those signs for new public and private roads. Concerns about your road signs can be directed to the Rowan County Planning Department at 704-638-3101.



Environmental Services

The Department of Environmental Services was created in 1988 when the Landfill Department, with seven employees, merged with the Building Inspections Department, which had eight employees. Once the merger was complete, a sixteenth employee was added and the department was located on North Main Street.

The Planning and Zoning Department was created in 1989 with the addition of a County Planner and a secretary. An Assistant Planner was added in 1991. In 1994, the county began the process of implementing a full range of land use ordinances, beginning with the adoption of a subdivision ordinance in 1994 and culminating into the adoption of county wide zoning in February 1998.



In 1989, Environmental Services was underway in closing the old landfill and constructing the new Subtitle-D Landfill, which was one of the first built in the state to meet the new requirements for the protection of the soil and groundwater around the landfill area. At this time Rowan County, also, established the recycling program with the addition of staffed convenience centers. Rowan County was one of the first to implement recycling for its citizens in the state.

Development of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) began in 1993. Primary goals are to provide updated computerized property and 911 mapping. A GIS Coordinator was hired in 1998. The complete remapping of the county will be complete in 2003 and will provide comprehensive accessible mapping services for county citizens.

Now, the Department of Environmental Services employs 48 people that handle the planning and zoning, building inspections, erosion and sediment control, landfill and recycling for the citizens of Rowan County.

This department has undergone several major changes over the last 50 years. First, we closed the old trash dumps and landfill, constructed the new Subtitle-D landfill, and

recycling was implemented for the citizens of Rowan County with the construction of staffed convenience centers. Second, erosion and sediment control standards, enforced by Rowan County, have helped minimize the largest polluter of our waterways, sediment. And, with the adoption of a GIS system, we have been able to correct many addressing problems within the county and aide the 911 and telecommunications systems to provide the best possible service for all residents.

The future challenges of this department largely depend on population growth and new environmental issues that arise over the course of time. For the planning and zoning department, that challenge is to foster and encourage a more proactive approach to land use planning decisions in the county. This will provide a means to manage the future growth in a way that will provide long term benefit to the county.

Planning and Zoning (excludes municipalities):

Area Serviced: 62,250 People

426.5 square miles

People served: 10,000

Zoning Permits: 1350

Major subdivisions: 16

Minor subdivisions: 188

Codes enforcement complaints received: 3000

Rezoning and text amendments: 31

Conditional use permits: 28

Building Inspections:

Area Serviced: All of Rowan County

Permits issued: 8445

Inspections: 22,327

Fire Inspections: 488

Codes enforcement complaints: 1051

Erosion and Sediment Control:

Area Serviced: All of Rowan County

Erosion Control Inspections: 350

Acts as the administrative oversight of the Rowan County water system and the North Second Creek wastewater treatment plant.

Solid Waste Department:

Area Serviced: All of Rowan County

Tons Landfilled: 136,419

Tons Recycled: 1828

Tons Mulched/Composted: 3452

Solid Waste Complaints: 200

Public Safety

Sheriff's Department

The Rowan County Sheriff's Office was established in 1753, with the Sheriff as the only officer. There are now 146 full time employees of the office. Last year, the Office was awarded the J. Stannard Baker Award, a national award for outstanding achievement in highway safety.

The greatest sources of change includes the advance of technology and the proliferation of illegal drug use. Certainly in the early days and up until mid 1900's, by communication between deputies, the Sheriff, and the general public was by word of mouth. Information traveled slowly, and it was as easy for criminals to travel from area to area without fear of detection. Today, there are numerous developments in technology that are of great assistance to the Rowan County Sheriff's Office. Most all the vehicles are equipped with



800 megahertz radios that allow officers to communicate with the dispatch center, other agencies, and other deputies. This communication is always constant and on-going so that citizen complaints and potential problems can be reported and handled in a timely fashion. Most vehicles devoted to the patrol division are equipped with Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) which allow deputies to send and receive information through the Division of Criminal Information (DCI) and the National Criminal Information Center (NCIC). These in-car computers allow deputies to check driver's license information without ever leaving their patrol unit. Also, a number of patrol units at The Rowan County Sheriff's Office are equipped with in-car camera systems which allow deputies to videotape traffic stops for later use in court, and in one incident a suspect was caught on tape from an in-car camera system committing a burglary.

Beginning in the 1960's, the use of illegal drugs became a problem in this country. The consumption of illegal or "bootleg" liquor gave way to the use of marijuana, LSD, and cocaine. Today in Rowan County, the Sheriff's Office Special Investigative Unit has seized many different types of illegal drugs during the course of their investigations. The Sheriff's Office has seized marijuana, LSD, cocaine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy, as well as large quantities of prescription drugs that were being misused by "drug dealers." Many of the domestic incidents and burglaries are directly related to the use of illegal

drugs. The Rowan Sheriff's Office has made the apprehension of drug dealers and users of illegal drugs one of its top priorities. The Special Investigative Unit of the Rowan County Sheriff's Office has increased both the number of drug related arrests and drug seizures during the last four years.

Future plans of the Rowan County Sheriff's Office are to continue to provide the citizens of Rowan County with quality law enforcement that is "tough on drugs and tough on criminals who victimize the public." The Sheriff's Office intends to continue providing quality law enforcement by obtaining the latest equipment and technology available.

As always, there are many challenges to effective law enforcement. The greatest challenge to the Rowan County Sheriff's Office would be dealing with the continuing growth in population and the increasing demand for services. As the population continues to grow, there will be a need for more patrol officers and smaller patrol zones to effectively deal with the criminal element. The Rowan Detention Center now is routinely over capacity with the number of inmates it houses, and increases in population will only require more space in the already overcrowded Detention facility.

Emergency Medical Services

EMS was created on July 2, 1984 and the Emergency Services Department was created in November 1985.

The change from a privately-operated EMS system, funded partially by the county, to a professional county-staffed service and the upgrade of that service to paramedic care have greatly enhanced the quality of pre-hospital medical care provided the citizens of our county. They have made that care more accessible and more quickly obtained.

The problems are getting larger for us. The first is the rising cost of health care and along with that the increased demands on the system by an older population. That is also a huge challenge. If we look at the provision of health care, it is far more economical to do many things at home or in clinics than in a hospital, but insurance carriers for the most part do not pay for such expanded care. The amount of uncompensated care continues to rise, particularly in times of economic downturn.



The other growing problem and challenge is that of providing adequate, quality fire protection for our citizens. Fire Departments, like most volunteer organizations, are having increasing problems recruiting and retaining qualified people. There are many things competing for those hours now and volunteers are stretched thin. Increasingly we will see

more and more paid fire personnel manning firehouses in the county, particularly during weekday hours.

The call volume by Rowan EMS remains very steady at 10,000 per year. The change is that with more aggressive caller-screening, both by 9-1-1 and by EMS, more people are being found to be inappropriate for the use of scarce EMS resources. So while calls remain essentially flat for the past several years, there really has been an increase in calls-for-service; but the screening has gotten much better keeping a scarce resource available more of the time.

Telecommunications

The Telecommunications Department was formed in 1994, when the dispatch system was expanded to include 9 law enforcement agencies, who prior to this had provided their own individual service via the Sheriff Department. The 9-1-1 system in Rowan County was originally formed in 1987 and included a partially centralized facility that dispatched fire, EMS, and rescue services.



Our department is located in the County's Justice Center complex at 232 N Main Street. We have been at this location since 1994 when the department was first organized. The original 9-1-1 center was constructed in 1987 at the County Agricultural Building at 2727 Old Concord Road.

94,363 phone calls to 9-1-1 in 2001 resulted in 119,472 calls for service dispatched to various public safety and government agencies in Rowan County.

The fast pace of change in technology keeps the department busy making almost continual updates. Since the department first began, calls for service to 9-1-1 and dispatches to public safety agencies have continued to grow at an average rate of about 12% per year. These increases are due to the growth the county continues to experience in population and other changing demographics.

We have had to continually adjust our training models in order to keep our staff trained to adequate levels to meet both the technological and growth demands placed on the Department. As calls for service by the citizens of Rowan County increase, more and more demands are placed through the 9-1-1 system to provided an acceptable level of service without delays in either receiving calls or dispatching the some 40+ public safety agencies we provide services for.



The Telecommunications Department is truly service oriented. As the County's population grows and it's demographics change, this will continue to demand a higher work output from both the 9-1-1 and dispatch systems. The

Department will need to continually evaluate both it's handling of 9-1-1 calls and also the workload that increases in providing more and more dispatch services to accommodate the growth as public safety agencies must grow to provide adequate services of law enforcement, fire/rescue, and medical to their jurisdictions.



The Department is certified by the State of North Carolina to provide Emergency Medical Advanced Life Support Dispatch services. The entire Departments staff including it's Director have received national certification to provide this service.

In 2001, the Department was selected by the National Association of Public Safety Communications Officials to be the "model community" for North Carolina in the development of providing wireless 9-1-1 services to it's citizens. Rowan County is one of only 50 named in the country.

Animal Control

Rowan County has a large variety of wild and domesticated animals spread throughout its urban and rural areas. In managing our ever-growing animal population, Animal Control officers responded to over 5,400 service requests last year. The shelter, located on Julian Road across from the County Fairgrounds, can accommodate between 120 and 150 animals at one time. This facility features heated floors in the kennels and easy access viewing for adoptable animals. The shelter recently started a web page to increase access to shelter operations and to increase adoptions.

In addition to overseeing the animal adoption process, animal control educates the public about safety and disease prevention. Officers stay busy notifying the public of possible hazards associated with animal diseases and advising affected citizens on treatment options. The Health Department encourages all citizens to have their pets immunized against rabies.



Culture and Recreation

Parks

The Parks Department was begun in 1968 and went from one employee to seventeen. Its original location was Dan Nichols Park. There are five facilities that bring in \$710,000 per year, servicing about 800,000 to 1,000,000 people per year. In the future, we hope to provide even better facilities for the public.

With Haden's Carousel, the miniature train, nature center, petting zoo, playground, putt-putt, lake and sporting activities, Dan Nicholas continues to offer a family atmosphere, promoting family values. School children from all over the state visited Dan Nicholas, and staff members stayed busy with educational classes on nature, rocks and minerals.

Ellis Park continued its Pee-Wee league baseball program last year, with over 175 kids on ten teams. A newly refurbished kitchen in the dining room/kitchen makes the park a great location for birthday parties and family reunions. The facility is routinely rented for use on weekends. Attendance at the park last year topped 50,000. Sloan Park hosted Kids Day on the Hill, bringing kids together with area agencies for a fun day of activities. Among the participants were Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Fire Department, Carolina Raptor Center, and storytellers. Over 168 different schools have visited the park to take advantage of the playground, sports facilities and the tours of historic Kerr Mill. Fast becoming a semi-annual event, Sloan Park plays host to an antique sports car show. With the addition of two new mowers and a John Deere utility vehicle, the park stays in top shape for its 50,000-plus visitors each year. In the works is an audio walking tour, which will allow visitors to learn as they stroll the park's two trails, the Alice Stanback Monument Forest and the Henry W. Culp Famous & Historic Tree Trail.

The Special Populations Program insures the availability of recreation programs for those with disabilities and senior citizens of Rowan County. Bowling, swimming, art classes, putt-putt and field trips are just a sampling of the activities that drew close to 700 participants last year. The recent construction of a bocce facility at Ellis Park will be used by Senior Games and Special Olympics, both heavily supported by the Special Populations Department. With two full-time employees and 1 part-time employee, staff depends heavily on volunteer support, with many coming from Catawba and Livingstone Colleges.

Library

Rowan Public Library Enters 91st Year

“The best way to start a library is to start one,” stated Mrs. J. P. Moore at a meeting of the Travelers Club held on March 31, 1911. And start one they did. Rowan Public Library began its 91st year of operation in 2002.



The last 90 years have seen numerous changes in library locations, services and programs, but the original goal of maintaining a library to serve the information needs of local citizens has remained the same.



Under the sponsorship of the Travelers Club, a library was opened in the Henderson Law Office at the corner of Fisher and Church streets. In 1921 when the county built a new courthouse, the library was moved to the old courthouse, which had been redesignated as a community building. (This community center was the first of its kind to be established in the entire south.) In that same year the city and county provided a total of \$300 for operation of the library. Today, Rowan County contributes more than two million dollars annually for library operations.



Library Milestones from the Last 90 Years

- In 1936 the library employed its first professionally trained librarian, Miss Edith Clark. That same year the library name was changed from the Salisbury Public Library to Rowan Public Library, which better reflected the growing number of communities served by the expanding library system.



- In 1938 the library initiated special programming for children.
- In the 1940s community libraries were established in China Grove, East Spencer, Landis, Rockwell, Spencer, and Yadkin.
- A bookmobile was ordered in 1941, but delayed due to WWII. Bookmobile service eventually began in 1948. In 1991, the bookmobile was re-invented as an outreach



service targeted to preschool children called “Stories to Go”.

- A new 10,000 square foot library facility was opened in 1951 near the library’s first home, the Henderson Law Office. The family of the late Burton Craig donated the property and substantial funding to help build a new library.
- In 1954 the research papers of Mrs. J. Frank McCubbins were donated to the library, firmly establishing the library as a significant genealogy research center. During the last 48 years additional collections have been added, making RPL’s history room one of the premier genealogical research centers in the southeast.
- Interlibrary loan, whereby books are borrowed for library users from other libraries throughout the southeast, began in 1955. RPL was one of four pilot libraries in the state for this new service.



- In 1969 the Rowan Citizens for Better Libraries was organized. This group spearheaded an effort that resulted in a complete renovation of the library in the early 1970s. Also at this time the library acquired property adjacent to the library for future expansion.
- In the mid 1970s an adult outreach service was established to extend library services to persons who are homebound and to residents of care facilities.
- In 1979 the Rowan Citizens for Better Libraries was renamed the Friends of Rowan Public Library.
- In 1982 the South Branch library was opened to the public. This was the first full service branch established in the county.
- In 1984 RPL began provided microcomputers for public use.
- In 1986 RPL’s second full service branch library, the East Branch, was opened in Rockwell.
- In 1988-89 library headquarters expanded, representing an increase of 10,000square feet to 47,500 square feet.



- In 1990 the library implemented an automated library system, which automated is circulation and catalog functions and significantly improved efficiency.
- In 1991 Stories To Go first goes on the road as an award-winning program exclusively for pre-school children; it is one of the first on the East coast. The

Stories to Go vehicle was refurbished by inmates at the Piedmont Correctional Institution.

- In 1991 the Rowan Public Library Foundation was established for the purpose of building an endowment fund in support of the library's future growth.
- In 1996 the library began providing public access to the Internet, and develop a website. Rowan Public Library was among the first five libraries in the state to offer this service.



- In 1997 the County Commissioners purchased a new \$75,000 vehicle for Stories To Go, a model vehicle designed specifically for pre-school children by Matthews Specialty Vehicles.
- In 1998, the library was awarded the ALA/Info Today, Inc Library of the Future Award for its seamless integration of new technology into library operations.
- In 1999 planning began for a new regional library to serve the citizens living in the southern area of Rowan County.



- In 1999 Stories To Go received Smart Start funding to begin service to home child care centers.
- In 2002 RPL initiated a strategic planning process to enable RPL to prepare for the future.

Rowan Public Library looks forward to a future of serving the citizens of Rowan County. The coming years should prove to be one of the library's busiest as construction on the new South Rowan Regional Library begins and steps are taken to implement a new automation system.



Education

Education

The Rowan County Board of Commissioners is committed to investing in our county's future through the continued support of our public education system. The Board of Commissioners continues to keep our public schools a top priority to ensure that all our children are receiving the best education possible.

Rowan County schools continue to be the largest single recipient of county funds, over 1/3 of our total budget, which positively impacts almost 21,000 students in the Rowan-Salisbury, Kannapolis City Schools, and Rowan Academy (a charter school) in the Rowan County area.

In addition to this high level of ongoing financial support, the Commissioners established a special allocation of funds to be used specifically for classroom supplies. By placing the money in the hands of teachers, it enables them to acquire the necessary resources to better instruct our children.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service

The Cooperative Extension Service was started 88 years ago, in 1914. There were two offices then, a black office supported by NC A&T University and a white office supported by NC State University. The black office had a county ag agent and home agent, plus one secretary. The white office had a county ag agent, an assistant agent, a home agent and an assistant agent, plus two secretaries. The two offices merged in 1964. Presently there are five agents, two secretaries, and several program support staff.



Over the years, we have been able to provide quicker and more efficient service to our clients through use of computers, satellite, and communications. Information is provided faster and more up-to-date. We've also gone from a mostly agriculture and rural home audience to a more diversified and urban audience. This has meant that we offer more programs in horticulture, nutrition, environment, and urban outreach.

- Contacts: 14,304 face to face; 23,060 non face to face
- Media contacts: 3 television, 50 radio, 103 newspaper columns, and 2 magazine spots.
- \$80,650 in external grants to support programs.
- 4-H and Youth program reached 1021 youth in 40 classrooms, 220 youth in nine community clubs, and 295 youth in summer programs.
- 48 Master Gardener volunteers reached over 5000 people. They gave volunteer time worth \$25,185.
- Extension Community Association - 200+ volunteers gave over 13,000 hours to strengthen families in Rowan County.

In the last year, Ann Simmons of family and consumer education won an Early Career Award (first state) and Educational Curriculum Package. Darrell Blackwelder, horticulture agent was named Outstanding Cooperative Extension Agent by the NC State Entomology Dept. Robert Furr was also named State 4-H President in 2002.

Human Services

Health Department

The Rowan County Health Department serves the entire community by identifying public health needs and developing public health policy, by providing community programs and client services, and by promoting a safe and clean environment.

Major services and programs include:

- Adult Health services such as tuberculosis testing and treatment, HIV testing and counseling and adult immunizations.
- Child Health services including well-child visits and immunizations for children up to age 18.
- Dental Health & Education through the Smile Savers Program and the Smile Center.
- Family Care Coordination for at-risk children and pregnant women.
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC) nutrition program.
- Primary Health care for families with Medicaid, Health Choice Insurance and self-pay clients.
- Women's Preventive Health services such as annual physicals, mammograms, pap tests and prenatal services.
- Health Education through CHIP, Health Link and community consultation.
- Environmental Health; specialists inspected food establishments, wells and septic systems and investigated child lead poisoning cases.
- Health Link Transportation Services to eligible clients.

Some highlights of the Health Department's history include:

- The Health Department is started in January 1918 on the second floor of the county courthouse.
- The first full-time employees of the Health Department were a health officer, Dr. A.J. Warren, a sanitarian, and a clerical assistant.
- The first permanent dental clinic in North Carolina was established in Rowan County.
- Rowan was the first North Carolina county to adopt a system of inspecting milk due to the death of a prominent vet.
- Sanitary Rating of Cafes was published in the paper in 1947 and continues to present.
- Rowan was chosen as a pilot county to implement the Community Health Intervention Process (CHIP).

Department of Social Services

In 1919, Mary O. Linton worked alone as the administrator of funds from the federal relief program and various charities. Currently there are 174 employees. With North Carolina's adoption of the Social Security Act in 1937, the state became eligible for federal funds to deal with problems of the poor. A welfare board was established in every county resulting in a county-administered but state-supervised structure. The state-level board responsible for this supervision was named the State Board of Public Welfare in 1945. Around 1970, the name of the program was changed from public welfare to social services to avoid the stigma of the word welfare and to emphasize the new service features of the program that went beyond providing financial assistance. The social services program was incorporated into a newly-established umbrella agency called the Department of Human Resources, and the State Board of Social Services was abolished.

In the early 1970's, Social Services Block Grant funds were provided to the county to pay for certain mandated services: adoption, child care, family planning, foster care and protective services for children and adults, and either chore or homemaker services. DSS was also allowed to use SSBG funds to provide optional services such as day care for adults. Local matching money was required as a condition of receiving federal and state funds.

DSS developed a specific child protective services unit in the late 1960's and hired a full-time agency attorney. More recently, the agency was selected as a Families for Kids county in 1997, and was awarded a \$100,000 W.K. Kellogg grant to provide what abused and neglected children really need: agencies working together; a single, stable foster care placement; and a permanent home within one year of being placed in DSS custody. The FFK initiative reached out to the community to find creative ways to support families and protect children.

Also in 1997, the State Division of Social Services determined that Rowan County DSS was severely understaffed in the number of child protective service investigators when compared to the number of cases. Funds were provided by the state and, with County Commissioners' approval, an additional 15 employees were added to the workforce. The Rowan County Task Force for Child Abuse Prevention was formed. This group, which continues to be an active, vital force in child protection, examined the existing abuse prevention network, identified problems, found solutions, and developed the community protocol for child abuse prevention.

President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, transforming a program of eligibility determination and financial support into a complex set of programs focused on job training and placement along with support for child care and health services. The act was designed to modify behavior at the client and agency level. For clients, financial assistance for dependent children was no longer an entitlement but became part of a continuum of services designed to move the client toward her or his ultimate goal - a job. Parents were advised of a five-year lifetime limit

to cash assistance. Welfare reform provided disincentives for welfare mothers to have children and instead put the pressure on them to work and support their families. DSS partnered with other agencies - such as Employment Security Commission, Rowan Partnership for Children, Health Department, Vocational Rehabilitation, Piedmont Behavioral Healthcare, Salisbury-Rowan Community Service Council, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, and Family Crisis Council -- in an effort to expand the range of services to clients. DSS staff were trained to develop client personal responsibility agreements, how and when to apply sanctions, who is employable and who should be exempt from work requirements, who should be assigned to community service and where, what services are needed and from whom, whether and how to discuss issues involving marriage and pregnancy prevention, and how to handle child support issues. The expanded range of services and sanctions, coupled with the emphasis on the goals of anti-dependency and work, transformed the local DSS from a regulatory agency responsible for the proper distribution of benefits to a structure for complex and individualized problem solving. The welfare reform program in NC was named "Work First" by Governor Jim Hunt.

The public assistance and service programs, each with their own set of federal and state regulations, while addressing the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, are extremely complex to manage. Policies and procedures generated from the State Division of Social Services are not easy to understand and implement. Policy does not always offer the needed flexibility when addressing unique human service issues.

The operating budget for the current fiscal year is \$121,082,269. DSS takes its responsibility for accountability of public funds extremely seriously, making every effort to draw down non-county revenues and to take advantage of all grants and funding sources. The department has one unit of employees devoted completely to fiscal management.

With the complexity of programs and "bureaucratic red tape," DSS employees have had to become specialists in one or two specific program areas. For example, no longer can a caseworker or social worker know, understand, and be able to apply all the policies of Work First, food stamps, Medicaid, and child support programs - it is simply too much for one person to handle. The same child protective service worker cannot handle the responsibilities of foster home licensure. The adult services social worker who helps grandmother with nursing home placement of her husband cannot help grandmother with day care for the grandchild she is raising. Therefore, clients may have several employees who are helping them deal with their needs. Also, DSS employees are housed in three different locations because of inadequate office space under one roof. Again, clients must maneuver their way through the system, and their frustration must surely rise until all the pieces of the DSS puzzle fall into place for them and help is provided.

The agency is clearly focused on providing protective services to abused and neglected children. The last Biennial Review, conducted by the state's Children's Services Division, indicated that Rowan County DSS has made vast improvements in its delivery of services to children suspected of abuse and neglect. Additional funding for personnel,

training from the state, guidance of field consultants, and a commitment from staff have made it possible for a successful program.

Although welfare reform was successful in reducing the welfare roles, many who found jobs are still living in poverty as they are earning minimum wages. These individuals are vulnerable to a down turn in the economy. The population of clients remaining on the welfare roles have significant obstacles to employment that make their placement in the workforce far more difficult than those placed in the first wave of welfare reform.

The requirements for verification and documentation have increased over the years. However, with personal computers the days of writing and dictating cases for a clerical worker to transcribe as well as having a unit of key punch workers are, thankfully, long gone!

DSS must work in cooperation with agencies, the religious community, and individuals to assure that our most vulnerable citizens are protected. It is more difficult to protect children in a time when there is a deterioration of the family and family values. DSS will be challenged to provide services and resources to meet the needs of the elderly, as their numbers increase and the cost of health care rises. Staff must be prepared to address the needs of the increasing non-English speaking population in this county. They will also need to find resources for an unskilled, uneducated work force that cannot earn a “living wage” for their families unless there are new businesses and an expanded transportation system.

None of the above challenges can be met unless DSS maintains a sufficient number of highly trained, dedicated, caring staff. Society’s needs are changing: there are increasing numbers of single parents, divergent lifestyles, undisciplined juveniles, and those with various addictions. DSS must not only have superb employees but also must maintain its current partnerships and create new alliances with others who are concerned about our world. DSS must be proactive and prepared. Otherwise, we will only be a mediocre organization and our citizens will suffer.

- DSS programs and services reach an estimated 30,000 people each year.
- 34 adoptions were finalized in the past 12 months
- 131 children are currently being cared for in licensed foster homes and facilities
- 1,349 investigations were conducted last year because of suspected child abuse and neglect
- Throughout the year at any given point, DSS served approximately 75 elderly and disabled adults with supportive services that enabled them to remain in their own homes.
- \$6,935,977 was collected last year from absent parents by DSS child support agents, and 330 paternities were established for children
- DSS staff made it possible for approximately 15,300 low income persons to receive Medicaid each month to help with the cost of medical care, while nearly 8,000 individuals received food stamps.

- An average of 800 families were assisted with Work First payments each month, but over 326 Work First recipients found work in the past 12 months because of services received through or coordinated by DSS employment staff.
- More than 300 parents were diverted in the past 12 months from applying for Work First cash assistance because of the agency's supportive services and the Benefit Diversion program.
- While their parents work or complete school, almost 1,100 children are safely cared for in day care facilities, with payments subsidized by grants that come through DSS, including Smart Start funds.
- \$220,000 in county money was saved as a result of staff's efforts to move children who are in agency custody from high-dollar facility placements into less costly facilities.
- The cash value of food stamps approved for Rowan County clients last year, with most of the benefits being spent in Rowan County, was \$7,288,797.
- The total amount of Work First benefits paid to clients last year was \$1,630,542.
- The value of Medicaid reimbursements for clients was \$91,885,479.
- Child care subsidies, composed of both Smart Start and Child Development funds, totaled \$3,658,231.
- A special grant from the NC Department of Transportation was administered by DSS, with \$14,384 paid out to providers.
- Rowan County DSS was accredited by the NC County Social Services Accreditation Council at Level III, the highest level that a DSS can achieve. Rowan County DSS is the 11th county to be accredited in NC.
- DSS received \$127,070 in federal incentive funds because of its successful adoption program. These funds will be put back into the program to provide expanded services to foster and adoptive families and the children they serve.
- DSS reduced by 17% the number of children who have been in agency custody for more than a year, by moving these children from foster care into permanent homes. The average reduction among counties comparable to Rowan was 9%.

Senior Services

The department, originally located at 130 West Innes Street, was initially called "Office on Aging." "Senior Services" sounded more upbeat, progressive and mission oriented, so the new name was coupled with a new location at 1120 South Boundary Street. The number of people served annually has mushroomed to an estimated 4,800 in 2002.

Rowan Transit Service, co-ordinated by Terry Julian, serves the needs of many area agencies, and is a component that is vital to the success of other programs. Rowan Transit Service averages 1,800 miles a day, with 30 vehicles driving in excess of 500,000 miles a year. Their missions range from taking mentally handicapped clients to workshop and recreational programs to transporting dialysis patients. Some nursing homes use RTS as an alternative to an ambulance service. The transportation service and the Nutrition program were the first two endeavors of Senior Services.

The Nutrition Program, co-ordinated by Willie Reddick, serves approximately 290 clients MOnday through Friday, except on holidays and during inclement weather. Yearly serving days average 244. Eight strategically placed nutrition sites include: China Grove, Dunbar, Rockwell, Granite Quarry, Lafayette, West Rowan, Mt. Tabor, and Kannapolis.

In-Home Aide services offer help with household chores and personal care needs. This popular program served 90 different seniors during the past year, helping these individuals avoid institutionalization.

Adult Day Care offers subsidized placement into their program and at present has no waiting list. For those who don't want to go into a full-time nursing home, this



arrangement is a great transitional alternative. It enables caregivers to continue working regular jobs, or simply to have time alone. The Caregivers Support Program not only offers a helping hand for caregivers for the elderly, but also assistance for elders who are raising grandchildren or foster children.

Filling out medicare and health insurance forms can be a mind boggling experience for many seniors. Help is just a phone call away because a SHIIP representative is ready and willing to help make sense of the maze of questions. Occasionally the elderly fail to file for benefits they deserve because they hesitate to tackle the paperwork involved.

The SAFE program offers safety assessment for emergencies and installs fire and security devices. The program is offered free of charge through the Senior Services Department with a first year grant of \$10,000 and a second year grant of \$14,000 from the Robertson Foundation. Handicapped or homebound persons of any age, social or economic condition are eligible for this service.

Senior Services offers help for qualified persons 55 and older who want to get back into the labor market.

Tar Heel Cards are offered to persons 60 and older for discounts in stores and restaurants. At age 62 you can get a Gold Card that enables free access to school based activities.

Ombudsman Cindy Kincaid keeps a watchful eye on the elderly in nursing homes and other assisted living facilities. Volunteer ombudsmen serve on boards and make visits to facilities to assure that patients' rights are being honored. Intervention before a major crisis occurs is their goal.

Veterans Services

The Veterans Services Department provides direct services to military veterans and their families. Specific services offered include assistance with; filing compensation and

pension applications, applications for medical care at the VA Hospital, education benefits for children of veterans, VA Loan Eligibility Certificates, obtaining burial benefits for veterans, and information on veterans group life insurance. Miscellaneous tasks handled by staff include obtaining lost military discharges, replacing service medals and applying for lifetime hunting & fishing licenses. With over 14,000 veterans in Rowan County, the Veterans Services Department fielded over 10,000 requests for service with an estimated 5,000 individuals or families served. With Federal dollars spent last year on compensation and pension claims to veterans and their families in Rowan County, the positive economic impact to our community is great.

Pretrial Services

The Pretrial Service (PTS) program began in the spring of 2000 with the objective to reduce the number of detainees in the Detention Center. This reduction lowers the risk of injury to county staff and detainees and has delayed the need for expansion of the



Detention Center. PTS targets “low risk” bonds and if the detainee meets eligibility, the program pays the bond premium to secure pretrial release.

State Grant funds are used to cover the operating expenses and detainee funds from concession sales are used to post the bond premium, which the detainees agree to repay to PTS. There is no risk transferred to the county or judicial officials should the detainee fail to appear on the

scheduled court date.

Economic Development

Economic Development Commission

The Salisbury-Rowan Economic Development Commission, in a cooperative effort with Rowan County Government, works to promote Rowan County as an excellent location for expansion or relocation for manufacturing, distribution or office investments. Past successes include such companies as Freightliner, American LaFrance, GDX (formerly Draftex), and Aldi Distribution. Most recent additions include the locations of Progress Energy, Meridian Automotive Systems and Service Supply Distribution. Progress Energy's multi-million dollar capital investment with its peak generation plant will add significantly to the Rowan County tax base for many years to come. Meridian Automotive Systems' recent decision to locate in a 450,000 sq. ft. facility on US Hwy 70 will also provide a multi-million dollar capital investment and eventually provide up to 250 jobs. Service Supply Distribution has located in a 56,000 sq. ft. facility in the Summit Corporate Center. Entergy has purchased a large tract of land with plans to construct a \$380 million power plant generating facility in Rowan County.

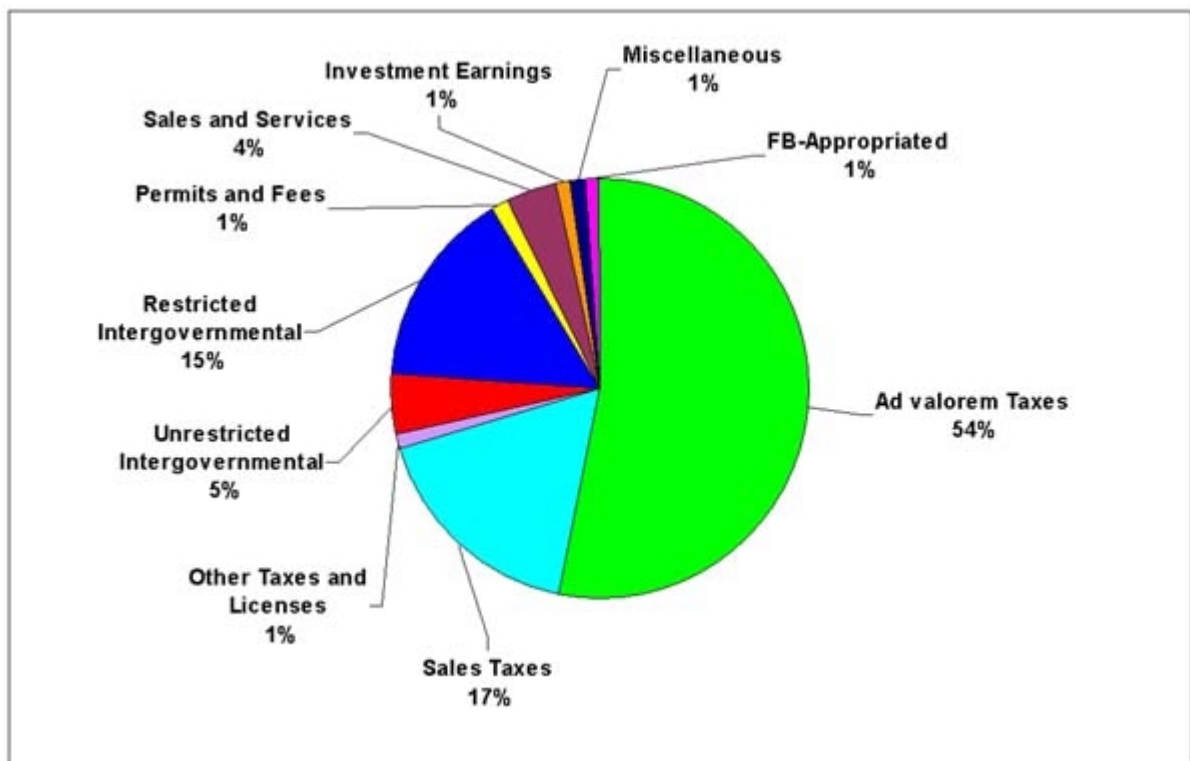
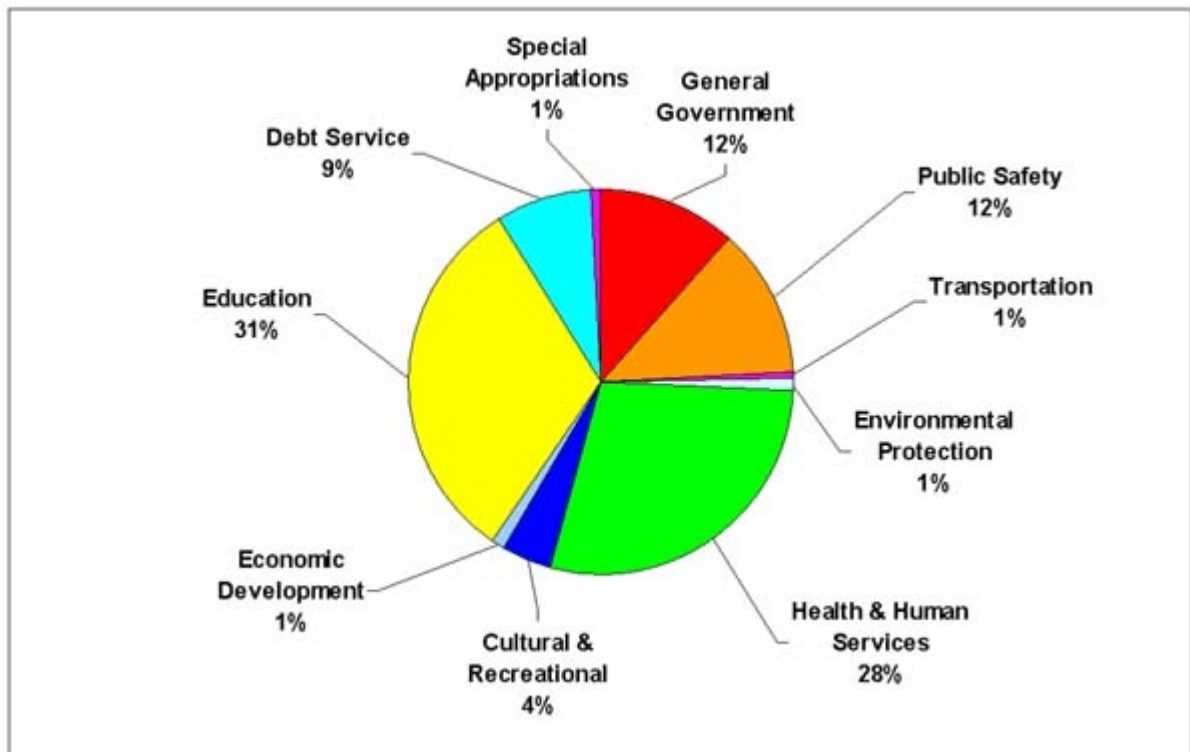
The Salisbury-Rowan Economic Development Commission will continue to promote and market Rowan County as a premier location for successful business ventures.



Rowan County Airport

Rowan County contracts with Star Aircraft, LLC as a Fixed Base Operator to operate the airport, located one mile south of Salisbury. Star Aircraft, LLC offers aircraft sales and service, ramp service and fuel and flight instruction. About 125 aircraft are housed at the airport, with sixty five tied down and the remainder kept in hangars. The aircraft belong to private citizens and local businesses, including four helicopters owned by the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. Approximately 2,500 landings and takeoffs occur each month. The 5,500 foot runway, with a complete Instrument Landing System accommodates corporate and business aircraft.

Expenditures and Revenues



Departments and Phone Numbers

Administration	704-638-3198
Airport	704-633-5021
Ambulance Billing & Collections	704-636-4533
Animal Shelter	704-633-0482
Codes Enforcement	704-636-8747
Convention & Visitors Bureau	704-638-3100
Cooperative Extension	704-633-0571
County Assessor's Office	704-636-0361
County Manager's Office	704-633-0361
Detention Center	704-638-3051
Economic Development Commission	704-637-5526
Elections	704-633-6231
Emergency Services	704-638-0911
Environmental Health	704-642-2000
Environmental Services	704-638-3078
Finance	704-638-3090
Health Department	704-633-0411
Human Resources	704-636-1658
Information Systems	704-633-5761
Landfill	704-278-2211
Library	704-638-3001
Parks	704-636-2089
Planning/Zoning	704-638-3101
Pretrial Services	704-797-0530
Recycling Center	704-638-3045
Register of Deeds	704-638-3102
Rowan 250Fest	704-645-1753
Senior Services	704-636-2344
Sheriff's Office	704-636-1011
Social Services	704-633-4921
Special Populations	704-637-3120
Tax Collector's Office	704-633-3871
Telecommunications	704-638-3111